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World demographic trends

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Prepared in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/2, the present report provides an overview of demographic trends worldwide, for major areas and selected countries. It covers population size and growth, urbanization and city growth, population ageing, fertility and contraception, mortality and international migration. In addition to covering world demographic trends, this report includes a section on population policies, in which the concerns and responses of Governments with respect to major trends are summarized.

The report indicates that world population reached 6.5 billion in 2005 and that the world's population could ultimately stabilize at about 9 billion people. Considerable diversity exists in the expected population growth of countries. The population of many countries, particularly in Africa and Asia, will increase greatly in the coming decades. In contrast, owing to below-replacement fertility levels, some developed countries are expected to experience significant population decline. Half the world's population is expected to live in urban areas by 2007. Although the number of very large urban agglomerations is increasing, about half of all urban-dwellers live in small settlements with fewer than 500,000 inhabitants. The proportion of older persons is expected to continue rising well into the twenty-first century.

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Most countries, both developed and developing, have experienced significant fertility decline, in line with increased contraceptive use. Most developed countries exhibit fertility levels at or below the replacement level. Although most developing countries are far advanced in the transition from high to low fertility, some developing countries, mainly in Africa, still exhibit high fertility. Until recently, it was expected that mortality would continue declining in all countries. However, HIV/AIDS has already produced marked increases in mortality in Africa, the region most affected by the disease. The number of migrants more than doubled between 1960 and 2000. Affecting countries of origin, transit and destination, international migration is in the forefront of national and international agendas.

High mortality is the most significant population concern for developing countries. The most significant demographic concern of the developed countries relates to low fertility and its consequences, including population ageing and the decline in the size of the working-age population.

In sum, the report concludes that the current population picture is one of dynamic population change, reflected in new and diverse patterns of childbearing, mortality, migration, urbanization and ageing. The continuation and consequences of these population trends present opportunities as well as challenges for all societies in the twenty-first century.

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Introduction

1. The present report provides a global overview of demographic trends for major areas and selected countries. It reviews major population trends relating to population size and growth, urbanization and city growth, population ageing, fertility and contraception, mortality, including HIV/AIDS, and international migration. In addition, a section on population policies has been included, in which the concerns and responses of Governments to the major population trends are summarized.

2. The demographic trends presented are based on the results of *World Population Prospects: The 2002 Revision*,[1] the eighteenth round of official United Nations population estimates and projections prepared by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat. The results of the nineteenth round, the 2004 revision, are nearing completion and are expected to be released in the near future.[2]

3. The world demographic trends presented in the publication *World Population Prospects* provides estimates for the period 1950-2000 and projections for 2000-2050. Consistent longer-range projections have been prepared to the year 2300. Results can be found in *World Population to 2300*,[3] also prepared by the Population Division.

4. The world demographic trends are based on population estimates and projections made separately for each country or area. Projections of the population by age and sex are prepared by using the components method, which requires that explicit assumptions be made about future levels of fertility, mortality and international migration. Sets of countries are grouped into geographical regions and major areas, more developed regions and less developed regions, as well as into the group of least developed countries.

5. Data on urban, city and rural population growth are derived from the Population Division publication, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 Revision*.[4] This publication presents estimates and projections of urban and rural populations for all countries of the world and of all urban agglomerations with 750,000 inhabitants or more in 2000. The data are consistent with the total populations estimated and projected according to the medium variant published in *World Population Prospects: The 2002 Revision*.

6. Data on contraceptive use are based on information from *World Contraceptive Use 2003*[5] and *World Fertility Report 2003*,[6] issued by the Population Division. The publications are part of the Population Division's ongoing monitoring of the use of family planning at the world level. The publications present, among other things, the most recent data available on current contraceptive practice, as well as recent trends in contraceptive use, for the countries and areas of the world. Data on international migration are derived from the Population Division publications *Trends in Total Migrant Stock: The 2003 Revision*,[7] *International Migration Report 2002*[8] and *World Economic and Social Survey 2004* (Part two: International migration).[9] These publications present estimates of levels and trends of international migration for each country and area of the world. They also show the growth rate of migrant stock, the percentage of national populations that are international migrants and the percentage of migrants by sex. The estimates are derived mostly from data on the foreign-born enumerated by censuses.

7. The population policies of Governments presented in the present report are from *World Population Policies 2003*,[10] also issued by the Population Division. The monitoring of national population policies at the international level has a long history that goes back to the World Population Plan of Action adopted at the United Nations World Population Conference held in Bucharest in August 1974.[11] The policies examined cover the major population variables and are presented in a descriptive and concise format, focusing on analytical comparisons of countries and regions at present as well as over time. As is the case in the preparation of population estimates and projections, the monitoring of national population policies is guided by principles of objectivity and non-advocacy.

I. Population size and growth

8. World population reached 6 billion persons at the end of the twentieth century and is currently growing at 1.2 per cent annually. The addition of the sixth billion took place in a 12-year period, namely, between 1987 and 1999, which is the shortest period within which the world has gained a billion persons. The addition of the next billion, the seventh, is expected to take about 13 years.

9. The population of the world is expected to increase by 2.6 billion during the next 47 years, from 6.5 billion today to 8.9 billion in 2050 (medium variant). However the realization of these projections is contingent on ensuring that couples have access to family planning and that efforts to arrest the current spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic are successful in reducing its growth momentum.

10. The population of the more developed regions, currently estimated at slightly more than 1.2 billion persons, is anticipated to change little during the coming decades. However, some noteworthy demographic changes are expected to occur. In many countries, especially in Europe, populations are projected to decline, as fertility levels are expected to remain below replacement levels. Other developed countries will see their populations continue to grow because their fertility levels are closer to replacement levels and because of significant flows of international migration.

11. The population of the less developed regions is projected to rise steadily, from about 5.2 billion persons today to 7.7 billion persons by mid-century (medium variant) That projection assumes continuing declines in fertility. In the absence of such declines, the population of the less developed regions could be substantially larger than projected. Particularly rapid growth is expected in the group of 50 countries classified as the least developed. By mid-century, for example, the population of the least developed countries could more than double in size.

12. The annual increment to world population during 2000-2005 has been estimated at 77 million persons (table 1). Six countries account for half of that amount: India (21 per cent); China (12 per cent); Pakistan (5 per cent); and Nigeria, the United States of America and Bangladesh (about 4 per cent each). As a result of India's relatively rapid growth, it is expected to overtake China as the most populous country in the world by 2035.

Table 1
Countries accounting for 75 per cent of population growth in the world, 2000-2005: medium variant

	Country	*Annual population increase 2000-2005 (millions)*	*Cumulated percentage*
1	India	16.0	21
2	China	9.4	33
3	Pakistan	3.7	38
4	Nigeria	3.1	42
5	United States of America	3.0	46
6	Bangladesh	2.9	50
7	Indonesia	2.8	53
8	Brazil	2.2	56
9	Ethiopia	1.7	58
10	Democratic Republic of the Congo	1.5	60
11	Mexico	1.5	62
12	Philippines	1.4	64
13	Egypt	1.4	66
14	Viet Nam	1.1	68
15	Turkey	1.0	69
16	Afghanistan	0.9	70
17	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	0.8	71
18	Uganda	0.8	72
19	Sudan	0.7	73
20	United Republic of Tanzania	0.7	74
21	Colombia	0.7	75
	WORLD	**76.6**	**100**

13. An additional 15 countries account for a quarter of the annual growth of the world's population (table 1). Among the 21 countries that together account for 75 per cent of the current world population growth, there is only one developed country, namely, the United States. The growth of the United States population represents close to 4 per cent of world population growth; however, about 40 per cent of the population growth of the United States is the result of international migration.

14. The world population growth rate has fallen from its peak of 2 per cent per year in the late 1960s to 1.2 per cent today. Nevertheless, United Nations population projections point to continued population growth during this century. The world population is expected to reach 7 billion persons by 2012, and 8 billion by 2028; the 9 billion mark should be reached just after 2050 (medium variant).

15. While world population is continuing to grow, considerable diversity exists in the expected population growth of countries. Though it is anticipated that the population of many countries will increase greatly in the coming decades, several countries are expected to grow little and quite a few are actually projected to

experience a decline in their population size. The contributions of the eight countries adding 100 million or more persons by mid-century are shown in table 2. India is expected to be the largest contributor to world population growth by far, adding slightly more than a half-billion persons by 2050. After India comes Pakistan, which is projected to gain about 200 million more persons, followed by Nigeria, the United States and China, with an additional 144 million, 124 million and 120 million persons, respectively. In contrast, the Russian Federation is expected to experience the largest decline in population, about 44 million persons; Ukraine, Japan and Italy follow, with projected decreases of 18 million, 17 million and 13 million persons, respectively.

Table 2
Top eight countries in terms of population increase and top eight in terms of population decrease from 2000-2050: medium variant

Country	*Population change, 2000-2050 (millions)*
A. Population increase	
1 India	514
2 Pakistan	206
3 Nigeria	144
4 United States of America	124
5 China	120
6 Bangladesh	117
7 Ethiopia	105
8 Democratic Republic of the Congo	103
B. Population decrease	
1 Russian Federation	-44
2 Ukraine	-18
3 Japan	-17
4 Italy	-13
5 Poland	-6
6 Romania	-4
7 South Africa	-4
8 Spain	-3

II. Urbanization and city growth

16. The world's urban population reached 3.2 billion persons in 2005 and is expected to rise to 5 billion persons by 2030 (table 3). On the other hand, the rural population of the world is expected to decline slightly from 3.3 billion in 2005 to 3.2 billion in 2030. Whereas 30 per cent of the world population lived in urban areas in 1950, the proportion of urban-dwellers rose to 49 per cent by 2005 and half the world population is expected to live in urban areas by 2007. The world's proportion of urban population is projected to reach 61 per cent in 2030.

Table 3
Selected indicators for the urban and rural population: world and more and less developed regions, 1950-2030

A. Population size and growth	Population (billions)				Average annual rate of change (percentage)		
	1950	1975	2005	2030	1950-1975	1975-2005	2005-2030
Total population World	2.52	4.07	6.45	8.13	1.92	1.54	0.92
More developed regions	0.81	1.05	1.21	1.24	1.01	0.48	0.11
Less developed regions	1.71	3.02	5.24	6.89	2.29	1.84	1.09
Urban population World	0.73	1.52	3.17	4.94	2.91	2.46	1.78
More developed regions	0.43	0.70	0.91	1.01	2.00	0.94	0.46
Less developed regions	0.31	0.81	2.27	3.93	3.91	3.42	2.20
Rural population World	1.79	2.55	3.28	3.19	1.43	0.84	-0.12
More developed regions	0.39	0.34	0.30	0.23	-0.46	-0.42	-1.15
Less developed regions	1.40	2.21	2.98	2.96	1.82	1.00	-0.03

B. Urban indicators	Percentage urban				Rate of urbanization (percentage)		
	1950	1975	2005	2030	1950-1975	1975-2005	2005-2030
World	29.1	37.3	49.2	60.8	1.24	0.92	0.85
More developed regions	52.5	67.2	74.9	81.7	1.23	0.36	0.35
Less developed regions	17.9	26.9	43.2	57.1	2.04	1.58	1.12

17. During the period from 2005 to 2030 the urban population of the less developed regions is expected to increase by 1.7 billion persons. By 2017, the number of urban-dwellers in the less developed regions will equal the number of rural dwellers. The average annual rate of change of the urban population of the less developed regions reached 3.4 per cent per year in the period 1975-2005 compared with 0.8 per cent in the more developed regions. In the future, the growth rate will continue to be particularly rapid in the urban areas of the less developed regions, averaging 2.2 per cent per year during 2005-2030. In contrast, the urban population in the more developed countries will be growing at an annual rate of change of only 0.5 per cent.

18. The process of urbanization is already very advanced in the more developed regions, where 75 per cent of the population lived in urban areas in 2005. Nevertheless, the concentration of population in cities is expected to continue, so that by 2030, 82 per cent of the inhabitants of the more developed countries will be urban-dwellers. The level of urbanization is considerably lower in the less developed regions, where 43 per cent of the population lived in urban areas in 2005. That proportion is expected to rise to 57 per cent by 2030.

19. There are marked differences in the level and pace of urbanization among the major areas constituting the less developed regions of the world. Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole are highly urbanized, with 78 per cent of the population living in urban settlements in 2005, a proportion higher than that of Europe. By 2030, 85 per cent of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean is projected to be urban, a proportion similar to that of Northern America (87 per cent), the most

highly urbanized area of the world. With almost 40 per cent of their respective populations living in urban areas in 2005, Africa and Asia are considerably less urbanized, but, are expected to experience rapid rates of urbanization during the period 2005-2030. It is projected that by 2030, 54 per cent and 55 per cent, respectively, of their inhabitants will live in urban areas.

Table 4
Population of cities with 10 million inhabitants or more, 1950, 1975, 2005 and 2015
(Millions)

	1950		*1975*		*2005*		*2015*	
	City	*Population*	*City*	*Population*	*City*	*Population*	*City*	*Population*
1	New York-Newark	12.3	1 Tokyo	26.6	1 Tokyo	35.3	1 Tokyo	36.2
2	Tokyo	11.3	2 New York-Newark	15.9	2 Mexico City	19.2	2 Mumbai (Bombay)	22.6
			3 Shanghai	11.4	3 New York-Newark	18.5	3 Delhi	20.9
			4 Mexico City	10.7	4 Mumbai (Bombay)	18.3	4 Mexico City	20.6
					5 São Paulo	18.3	5 São Paulo	20.0
					6 Delhi	15.3	6 New York-Newark	19.7
					7 Calcutta	14.3	7 Dhaka	17.9
					8 Buenos Aires	13.3	8 Jakarta	17.5
					9 Jakarta	13.2	9 Lagos	17.0
					10 Shanghai	12.7	10 Calcutta	16.8
					11 Dhaka	12.6	11 Karachi	16.2
					12 Los Angeles[a]	12.1	12 Buenos Aires	14.6
					13 Karachi	11.8	13 Cairo	13.1
					14 Rio de Janeiro	11.5	14 Los Angeles[a]	12.9
					15 Osaka-Kobe	11.3	15 Shanghai	12.7
					16 Cairo	11.1	16 Metro Manila	12.6
					17 Lagos	11.1	17 Rio de Janeiro	12.4
					18 Beijing	10.8	18 Osaka-Kobe	11.4
					19 Metro Manila	10.7	19 Istanbul	11.3
					20 Moscow	10.7	20 Beijing	11.1
							21 Moscow	10.9
							22 Paris	10.0

[a] Referring to Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana.

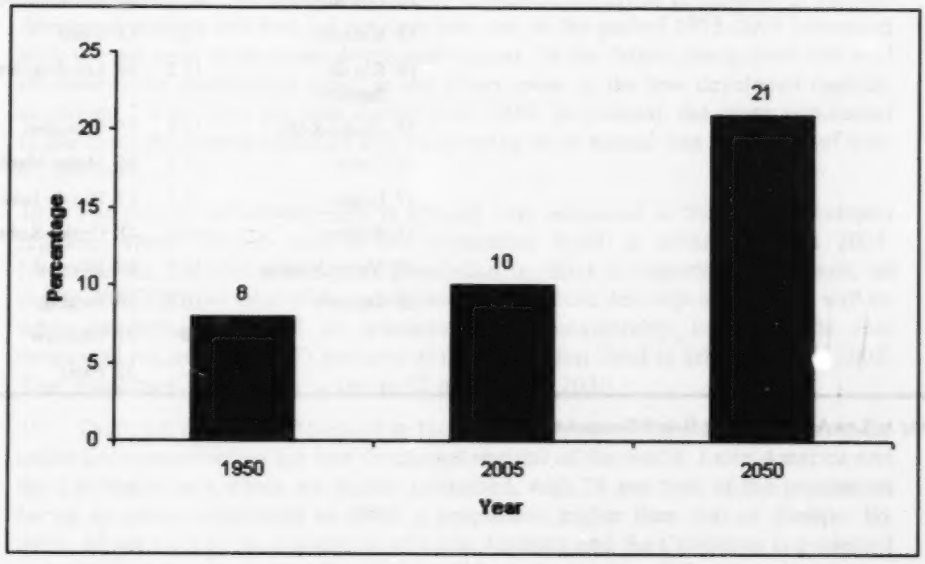
20. With 35 million inhabitants in 2005, Tokyo is the most populous urban agglomeration in the world, followed by Mexico City (19 million), New York-Newark (18.5 million) and Mumbai (Bombay) and São Paulo (18.3 million each) (table 4). By 2015, Tokyo will remain the largest urban agglomeration, with 36.2 million inhabitants, followed by Mumbai (Bombay), Delhi, Mexico City and São Paulo, all of which are expected to have at least or more than 20 million inhabitants.

21. The proportion of people living in very large urban agglomerations or mega-cities is relatively small. In 2005, 4.5 per cent of the world population resided in cities of 10 million inhabitants or more and by 2015 that proportion is expected to rise to 5 per cent. In contrast, 25 per cent of the world population lived in urban settlements with fewer than 500,000 inhabitants and by 2015 that proportion will likely rise to 27 per cent. In 2005, 39 per cent of the population in the developed countries lived in those small urban settlements; a decade from now, that proportion is expected to be similar at 40 per cent. In the less developed regions, where the majority of the population still reside in rural areas, the proportion of people living in small cities was 22 per cent in 2005 and will rise to 25 per cent by 2015.

III. Population ageing

22. During the twentieth century, the proportion of older persons (those aged 60 years or over) continued to rise and this trend is expected to continue well into the twenty-first century. For example, the proportion of older persons was 8 per cent in 1950 and 10 per cent in 2005 and is projected to reach about 21 per cent by mid-century (figure I).

Figure I
Proportion of population aged 60 years or over: world, 1950-2050



23. As the twenty-first century began, the world population included approximately 600 million older persons, triple the number recorded 50 years earlier. By 2050, the world is expected to have some 2 billion older persons — once again, a tripling of the number in that age group within a span of 50 years.

24. Globally, the population of older persons is growing by 1.9 per cent each year, considerably faster than the population as a whole. For at least the next 25 years, the older population is expected to continue growing more rapidly than other age groups. The growth rate of those aged 60 years or over will reach 2.7 per cent annually in the period 2025-2030. Such rapid growth will require far-reaching economic and social adjustments in most countries.

25. The population of all countries will continue to age substantially. For example, the median age of the world will rise from 26 years today to 37 years in 2050. As already noted, the number of persons aged 60 years or over will rise from 10 per cent of the world population today to 21 per cent in 2050. The percentage aged 80 years or over will rise from just 1 per cent today to 4 per cent in 2050.

26. Marked differences exist between regions in the number and proportion of older persons. In the more developed regions, one fifth of the population was aged 60 years or over in the year 2005; by 2050, that proportion is expected to reach one third. In the less developed regions, 8 per cent of the population is currently over age 60; however, by 2050, older persons will make up one fifth of the population.

27. As the pace of population ageing is much faster in the developing countries than in the developed ones, developing countries will have less time to adjust to the consequences of population ageing. Moreover, population ageing in the developing countries is taking place at much lower levels of socio-economic development than has been the case in the developed countries.

28. The older population is itself ageing. The fastest growing age group in the world is the oldest old, those aged 80 years or over. Their number is currently increasing at a rate of 4 per cent per year and they constitute more than one eighth of the total number of older persons. By the middle of the century, one fifth of older persons will be aged 80 years or over.

29. The potential support ratio (PSR) (the number of persons aged 15-64 years per one older person aged 65 years or over) indicates the dependency burden on potential workers. The impact of demographic ageing is visible in the PSR, which has fallen and will continue to fall. From 1950 to 2005, the PSR fell from 12 to 9 people in the working ages per each person aged 65 years or over. By mid-century, the PSR for the world is projected to fall to four working-age persons for each person aged 65 years or over (figure II). PSRs have important implications for social security schemes, particularly traditional systems in which current workers pay for the benefits of current retirees.

30. The majority of older persons are women, as life expectancy for women is higher than that for men. In 2005, there were 68 million more women than men aged 60 years or over and, at the oldest ages, there are two to five times as many women as men (figure III).

31. The declines in fertility reinforced by increasing longevity have produced and will continue to produce unprecedented changes in the age structure of all societies, notably the historic reversal in the proportions of young and older persons. The

profound, pervasive and enduring consequences of population ageing present opportunities as well as challenges for all societies.

Figure II
Potential support ratio (PSR): world, 1950-2050

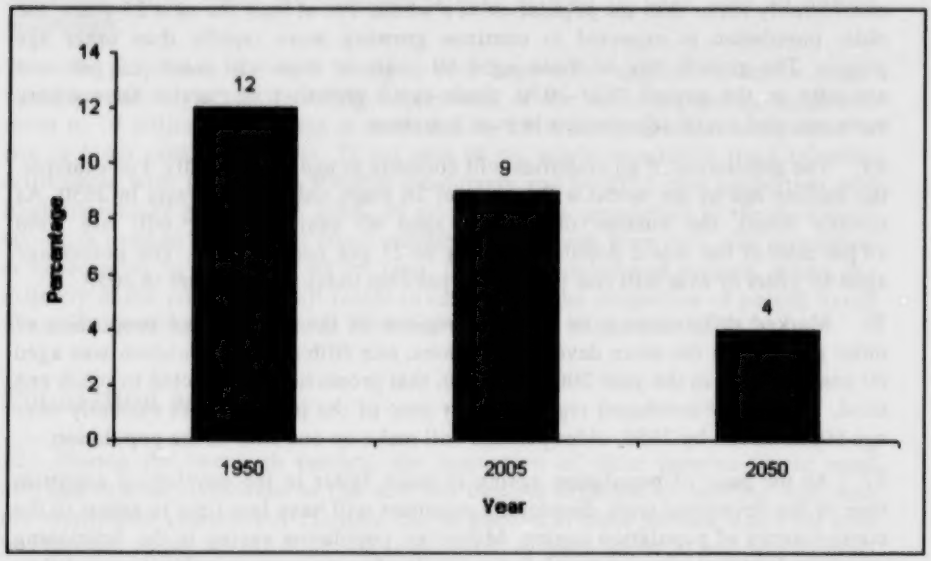
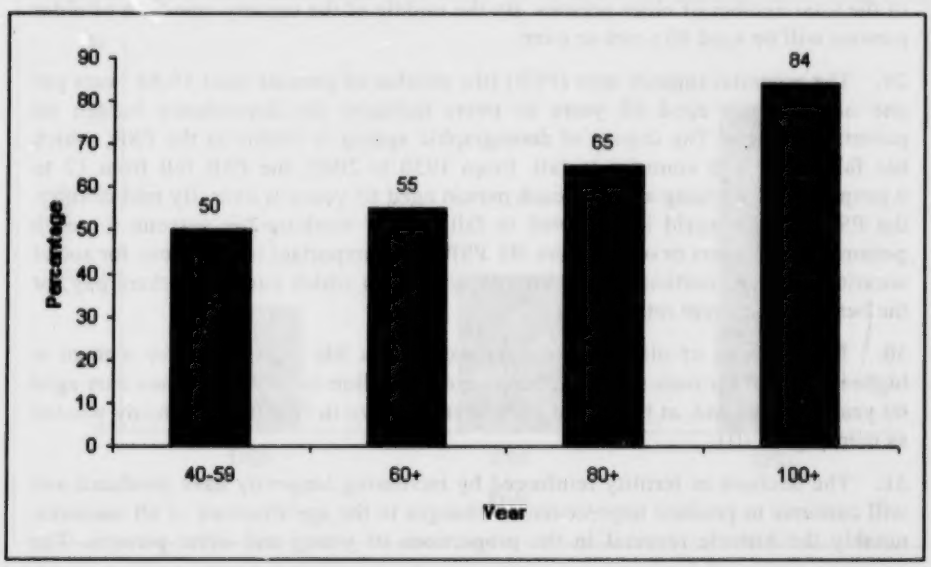


Figure III
Proportion of women among persons aged 40-59, 60+, 80+ and 100+ years: world, 2005



IV. Fertility and contraception

32. Fertility has declined substantially over the last several decades in all areas of the world. Around 30 years ago, for example, the total fertility rate — that is to say, the average number of children a woman would bear if fertility rates remained unchanged during her lifetime — was close to five children per woman at the world level. By the end of the twentieth century, the fertility rate had declined to slightly less than three children per woman.

33. In 2000-2005, 66 countries or areas exhibited fertility levels at or below replacement level. These countries accounted for about 43 per cent of the world's population, or 2.7 billion persons in 2003. Because their levels of fertility are low and are expected to remain low during the coming decades, the populations of those countries are projected to grow relatively little by mid-century, and in a number of countries population is expected to decline.

34. The remaining countries of the world, with a combined population of about 3.5 billion persons, exhibit total fertility levels above replacement level. Thirty-six countries have fertility levels at or above five children per woman in 2000-2005. As a consequence, the population of that group of countries is expected to grow markedly in the coming decades.

35. Among the developing countries, the pace of fertility decline during the recent past has varied significantly. Although by 2000-2005 most countries in the less developed regions are already far advanced in the transition from high to low fertility, there are some 14 countries that exhibit sustained high fertility and for which either there is no recent evidence about fertility trends or the available evidence does not indicate the onset of sustained fertility decline. In those countries, even though fertility is projected to decline after 2005, it is not expected to reach replacement level by the period 2045-2050. The high fertility of those countries will lead to rapid population growth. The countries involved all belong to the group of the least developed countries. The continuation of rapid population growth presents serious challenges to the future development of those countries.

36. Contraceptive use increased markedly over the past decade. At the global level, contraceptive prevalence increased from 54 per cent in 1990 to 59 per cent in 1995 and to an estimated 63 per cent in 2000. The fastest increases were in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean where contraceptive prevalence increased by more than 1 percentage point per year, on average. The increase was less rapid in Asia where prevalence increased by 0.8 percentage points per year between 1990 and 2000.

37. Modern methods account for a large proportion of current contraceptive use, especially in the less developed regions where they account for 90 per cent of contraceptive use compared with 81 per cent in the more developed regions. The three methods most used are female sterilization, the intrauterine device (IUD) and the pill, with prevalence levels of 21 per cent, 14 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively. These three methods account for two thirds of use worldwide.

38. Traditional methods are more popular in the developed countries than in the developing countries: they are used by 13 per cent of married couples in the more developed countries compared with just 6 per cent in the developing countries. The most used traditional methods include rhythm (periodic abstinence) and withdrawal.

In the world as a whole, those methods are used by about 7 per cent of married women.

39. Short-acting and reversible methods are more popular in the developed countries, whereas longer-acting methods are more popular in the developing countries. In the developed countries, contraceptive users rely mostly on pills (16 per cent of married women) and condoms (13 per cent). In contrast, female sterilization and IUDs, used by 23 per cent and 15 per cent of married women, respectively, dominate in the developing countries.

V. Mortality, including HIV/AIDS

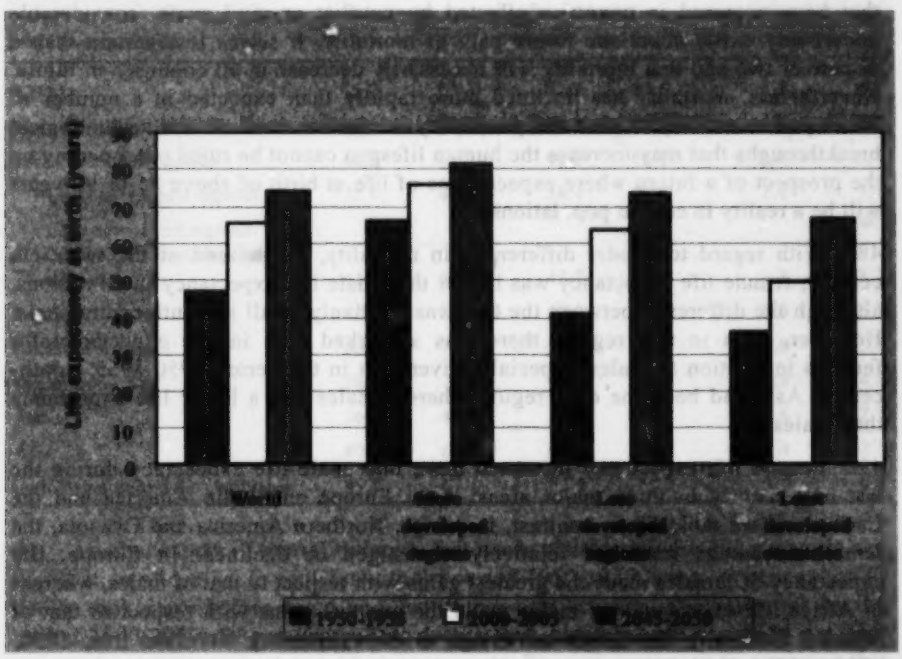
40. During the twentieth century, mortality experienced the most rapid decline in the history of humanity. Although the sustained reduction of mortality had started in the eighteenth century, it gained momentum in the early part of the twentieth century as better hygiene, improved nutrition and medical practices based on scientific evidence became the rule in the more advanced countries.

41. Despite the setbacks brought about by the First and Second World Wars, by the period 1950-1955, mortality had declined markedly in the more developed regions. For example, by the middle of the twentieth century, average life expectancy at birth had reached 66 years, ranging from 63 years in Southern Europe to 70 years in Australia and New Zealand.

42. The century also marked an important turning point in the less developed regions. With the expanded use of antibiotics, vaccines and insecticides, mortality in the developing world began to decline rapidly. For example, life expectancy at birth for the less developed regions increased by slightly more than 50 per cent from 1950-1955 to 2000-2005, rising from about 41 to 63 years. As a result, the mortality differentials between the less developed and the more developed regions narrowed. By the period 2000-2005, the difference in life expectancy between the two groups amounted to 12 years instead of 25 years, the difference observed in the period 1950-1955 (figure IV).

43. There remains, however, a group of countries — the least developed — where the reduction of mortality has lagged behind. While mortality declined in the least developed countries, it did not keep pace with mortality improvements in the less developed regions. For example, the difference between the life expectancy for the least developed countries and that for the less developed regions as a whole increased from 5 years in the period 1950-1955 to 14 years in the period 2000-2005. A major reason for such an increase is that the 50 countries classified as least developed include 26 that are highly affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Figure IV
Life expectancy at birth for the world, the more developed regions, the less developed regions and the least developed countries, 1950-1955, 2000-2005, and 2045-2050



44. Until fairly recently it was expected that mortality would continue declining in all countries, especially in those that were still experiencing moderate to high mortality levels because of their late start in the transition to low mortality. However, two developments have made it necessary to adjust those expectations: HIV/AIDS and the shocks from socio-economic transformations in countries with economies in transition.

45. The emergence of the virus that causes acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and the worldwide pandemic that it has generated have already produced marked increases in mortality in the countries most affected by the disease. By the end of 2003, about 58 million persons are estimated to have been infected by the virus and about 38 million were still alive. Some 93 per cent of those infected with HIV are living in the developing countries, with sub-Saharan Africa experiencing the highest prevalence rates. In addition, the number of countries where HIV prevalence has become significant has been growing rapidly in Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. While it is not yet certain that the spread in those regions will follow the pattern observed in Africa, rapid and effective responses may be required to avert the devastation that Africa is already experiencing.

46. It has also become evident that mortality has tended to stagnate or even to increase in certain countries with economies in transition, most of which exhibited fairly low mortality in the period 1950-1955. The causes for the slowdown or

reversal of the transition to low mortality are multiple and complex, but they have no doubt been exacerbated by the momentous social and economic transformations resulting from the political changes taking place in the former communist countries since 1985.

47. As a result of those developments and in the light of the increases in mortality that have occurred in countries affected by conflict or civil strife, considerable uncertainty exists about the future path of mortality. It seems less certain than a decade or two ago that mortality will necessarily decrease in all countries in future. Nevertheless, mortality has declined more rapidly than expected in a number of developed countries, so that the possibility of further medical and technological breakthroughs that may increase the human lifespan cannot be ruled out, opening up the prospect of a future where expectations of life at birth of above 85 or 90 years will be a reality in certain populations.

48. With regard to gender differences in mortality, by the end of the twentieth century, female life expectancy was higher than male life expectancy in all regions, although the difference between the two was relatively small in South-central Asia. However, even in that region, there was a marked gain in life expectancy for females in relation to males, especially given that in the period 1950-1955, South-central Asia had been the only region where females had a lower life expectancy than males.

49. Female life expectancy increased more than male life expectancy during the last half-century in three major areas: Asia, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean (see table 5). In contrast, in Africa, Northern America and Oceania, the female advantage remained relatively unchanged or declined. In Europe, life expectancy of females made the greatest gains with respect to that of males, whereas in Africa life expectancy of males made the greatest gains with respect to that of females. Generally, the female advantage in life expectancy increased from 1950-1955 to 2000-2005.

50. Over the past half century, a major part of the reduction of mortality has occurred in childhood. Overall levels of life expectancy are strongly determined by mortality at young ages, especially when mortality is high. Consequently, the marked increases in life expectancy that have occurred since 1950 at the world level reflect in large part sharp drops of mortality in childhood. Future reductions of mortality are expected to result in the virtual elimination of deaths at young ages in many countries. However, certain regions and countries are expected to fare better than others in achieving such a goal.

Table 5
Life expectancy at birth by sex, and sex differentials, for the world and major areas, 1950-1955 and 2000-2005

Major area or region	Male (years)		Female (years)		Difference between female and male life expectancy at birth (years)	
	1950-1955	2000-2005	1950-1955	2000-2005	1950-1955	2000-2005
World	45.2	63.3	47.9	67.6	2.7	4.3
More developed regions	63.6	72.1	68.5	79.4	4.9	7.3
Less developed regions	40.2	61.7	41.9	65.1	1.7	3.4
Least developed regions	35.0	48.8	36.4	50.5	1.4	1.7
Less developed regions without the least developed countries	41.0	64.6	42.7	68.3	1.7	3.7
Europe	62.9	70.1	67.9	78.2	5.0	8.1
Northern America	66.1	74.5	71.9	80.1	5.8	5.6
Oceania	58.0	71.8	62.9	76.6	4.9	4.8
Africa	36.5	47.9	39.1	50.0	2.6	2.1
Asia	40.7	65.5	42.1	69.0	1.4	3.5
Latin America and the Caribbean	49.7	67.1	53.1	73.9	3.4	6.8

51. Another aspect of mortality trends that needs consideration is the changing age distribution of deaths. In contrast with the period 1950-1955, when 43 per cent of all deaths took place before age 5 and just 26 per cent occurred above age 60, by the period 2000-2005, 19 per cent of all deaths took place by age 5 and 50 per cent occurred among persons aged 60 years or over. By mid-century, it is expected that only 4 per cent of all deaths will occur before age 5 and that 77 per cent of all deaths will be those of persons aged 60 years or over.

52. Most regions of the world are projected to see continuing improvements in their mortality rates and as a result, an increase in their expectations of life to levels that were, until recently, unprecedented in human history. However, for the least developed countries, even the substantial improvements expected by mid-century are unlikely to eliminate the gap in respect of mortality existing between them and the rest of the world. Moreover, given the setbacks that have occurred recently in many of those countries, it may not be at all certain that the projected improvements will be achieved.

VI. International migration

53. About 175 million persons, representing about 3 per cent of the world population in 2000, resided in a country other than the one in which they had been born. The number of migrants more than doubled between 1960 and 2000. Sixty per cent of the world's migrants reside in the more developed regions, while 40 per cent reside in the less developed regions. Most of the world's migrants live in Europe (56 million), Asia (50 million) and Northern America (41 million).

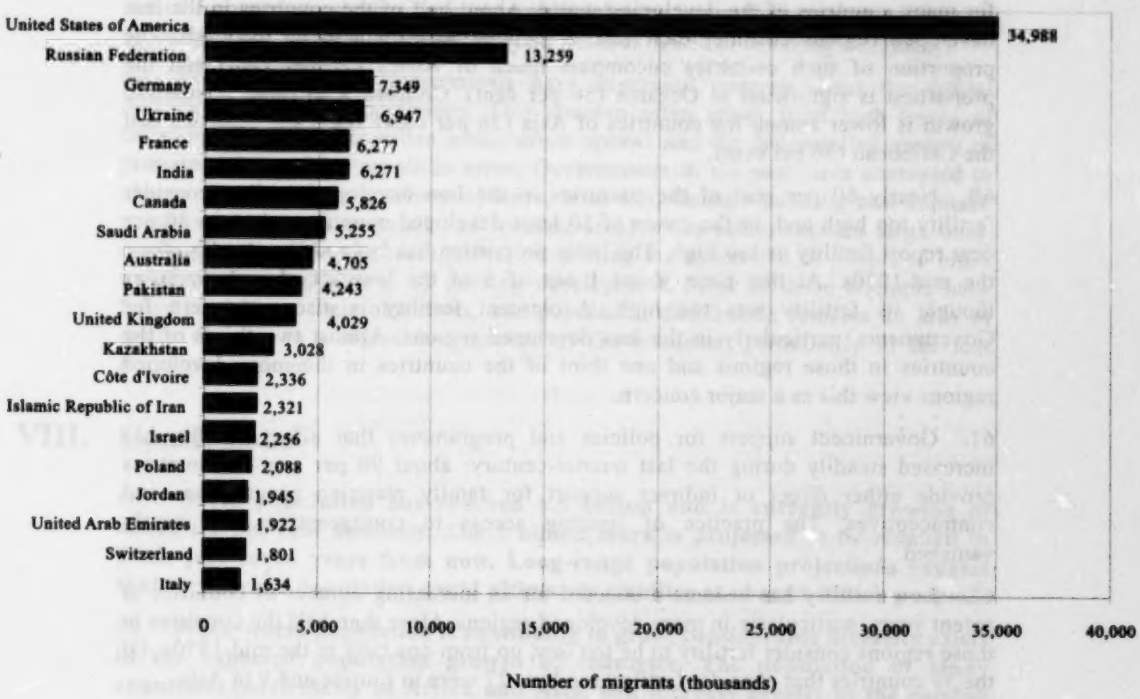
54. The volume of international migration is nearly equal for men and women. In 2000, females constituted almost 49 per cent of all migrants, up from 47 per cent in 1960 (table 6). While women and girls were slightly more numerous than males among migrants in 2000 in the more developed regions, they accounted for just under 45 per cent of all migrants in the less developed regions. At the regional level, female migrants are more numerous than male migrants in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern America and Oceania, but remain underrepresented in many parts of Africa and Asia.

Table 6
Proportion female among the stock of international migrants, by major area, 1960 and 2000

Major area	*1960*	*2000*
World	46.7	48.6
Developed countries	48.7	51.0
Developed countries excluding USSR	48.7	50.6
Developing countries	45.3	44.6
Africa	42.3	46.7
Asia	46.4	43.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	44.7	50.2
Northern America	49.8	50.3
Oceania	44.4	50.5
Europe	48.5	51.0
USSR (former)	48.0	52.1

55. Almost 1 of every 10 persons living in the more developed regions was an international migrant in 2000. In contrast, nearly 1 of every 70 persons in the developing countries was a migrant. With 35 million migrants, the United States was the single largest recipient, followed by the Russian Federation with 13 million and Germany with 7 million (figure V). The four countries with the highest proportion of international migrants were: the United Arab Emirates (68 per cent), Kuwait (49 per cent), Jordan (39 per cent) and Israel (37 per cent).

Figure V
Countries with the largest international migrant stock, 2000



56. Between 1995 and 2000, the more developed regions of the world gained nearly 13 million migrants from the less developed regions, around 2.6 million migrants per year. Net migration accounted for two thirds of the population growth in the more developed regions. The largest gains took place in Northern America, which absorbed about 1.4 million migrants annually, followed by Europe with an annual net gain of over 1 million.

57. At the end of 2003, the number of refugees in the world stood at 15 million, of which approximately 10 million were under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and 5 million under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The largest number of refugees was found in Asia (8 million) and in Africa (3 million). Three million refugees were in the developed countries and 12 million in the developing countries.

58. The remittances sent back to the home country by migrants represent an important aspect of international migration. Those moneys are a major source of foreign exchange earnings for some countries and an important addition to gross domestic product (GDP). For example, in 2000, remittances from abroad constituted more than 10 per cent of GDP for countries such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cape Verde, El Salvador, Jamaica, Jordan, Nicaragua, Samoa and Yemen.

VII. Population policies

59. Continued high rates of population growth remain an issue of policy concern for many countries of the developing world. About half of the countries in the less developed regions consider their rate of population growth to be too high. The proportion of such countries encompass much of Africa (77 per cent) and the proportion is significant in Oceania (56 per cent). Concern with rapid population growth is lower among the countries of Asia (36 per cent) and Latin America and the Caribbean (36 per cent).

60. Nearly 60 per cent of the countries in the less developed regions consider fertility too high and, in the group of 50 least developed countries, close to 80 per cent report fertility as too high. The latter proportion has been rising steadily since the mid-1970s. At that time, about 1 out of 3 of the least developed countries thought its fertility was too high. Adolescent fertility is also a concern for Governments, particularly in the less developed regions. Almost two thirds of the countries in those regions and one third of the countries in the more developed regions view this as a major concern.

61. Government support for policies and programmes that affect fertility has increased steadily during the last quarter-century: about 90 per cent of countries provide either direct or indirect support for family planning programmes and contraceptives. The practice of limiting access to contraceptives has nearly vanished.

62. Low fertility has become a concern for an increasing number of countries in recent years, particularly in more developed regions. More than half the countries in those regions consider fertility to be too low, up from one fifth in the mid-1970s. Of the 39 countries that consider fertility too low, 27 were in Europe and 9 in Asia.

63. Governments' views of their country's mortality level are split according to development level. About 70 per cent of the countries in the more developed regions consider the level of life expectancy to be acceptable, compared with 35 per cent of the less developed countries and 4 per cent of the least developed countries.

64. Some segments of the population — most notably infants and children under age 5 — continue to register unacceptably high mortality levels and are considered problem groups for many countries. Maternal mortality is another serious concern, particularly in the less developed countries. In the less developed regions, 1 country in 5 reports the level of maternal mortality to be acceptable, as compared with three fourths of the countries in the more developed regions. Only two of the least developed countries consider the level of maternal mortality to be acceptable.

65. During the 20 years since HIV/AIDS was identified as a disease, the pandemic has emerged as one of the leading causes of adult mortality in many countries, particularly in the less developed regions of the world. More than 80 per cent of the countries in those regions have reported that AIDS is a major concern, as have nearly 90 per cent of the least developed countries. Concern has also been substantial in the more developed regions, where three quarters of the countries view AIDS as a major concern.

66. Developed and developing countries show a similar inclination towards restricting immigration. Among developed and developing countries, one third have policies aimed at lowering their immigration levels. In comparison, in the mid-

1970s, 18 per cent of the developed countries and 3 per cent of the developing countries had adopted such policies. Concerning emigration, both the developed and the developing countries show similar trends in their views and policies. About 3 out of 4 countries, whether developed or developing, view their level of emigration as satisfactory, whereas 1 country in 4 has policies aimed at lowering emigration.

67. For many years, Governments have expressed concern about the spatial distribution of their populations. This concern often arises from high levels of migration from rural to urban areas, urban sprawl and the uncontrolled growth of primate cities and metropolitan areas. Governments in the past have attempted to change distribution in a variety of ways, inter alia, through building new capitals, encouraging growth in small and medium-sized cities rather than in large ones, creating regional development zones, controlling the movement of people to cities and limiting urban sprawl by curbing development. Most of those attempts have failed to achieve their objectives, and population distribution remains an area of major concern to a significant number of Governments, particularly in the less developed regions.

VIII. Conclusions

68. World population has reached 6.5 billion and is currently growing at about 1.2 per cent annually. The 7 billion mark is projected to be reached in 2012, just seven years from now. Long-range population projections suggest that the world's population could ultimately stabilize at about 9 billion people.

69. While world population is continuing to grow, considerable diversity exists in the expected population growth of countries. The population of many countries, particularly in Africa and Asia, will increase greatly in the coming decades. In contrast, owing to below-replacement fertility levels, some developed countries are expected to experience significant population decline.

70. The world's urban population is increasing rapidly, and is expected to increase from today's 3.2 billion persons to about 5 billion in 2030. Half the world's population is expected to live in urban areas by 2007.

71. The number of very large urban agglomerations is increasing. Tokyo, Mexico City, New York-Newark, Mumbai (Bombay), São Paulo and Delhi, all have more than 15 million persons. However, about half of all urban-dwellers live in small settlements with fewer than 500,000 inhabitants.

72. The proportion of older persons is expected to continue rising well into the twenty-first century. As the pace of population ageing is much faster in the developing countries than in the developed ones, developing countries will have less time to adjust to the consequences of population ageing. Moreover, population ageing in the developing countries is taking place at much lower levels of socio-economic development.

73. Most developed countries exhibit fertility levels at or below the replacement level. Although most developing countries are far advanced in the transition from high to low fertility, some developing countries, mainly in Africa, still exhibit high fertility.

74. Contraceptive use has increased significantly over the past decade, from 54 per cent in 1990 to 63 per cent in 2000. Short-acting and reversible methods are more popular in the developed countries, whereas longer-acting methods are more popular in the developing countries.

75. During the twentieth century, mortality experienced the most rapid decline in the history of humanity, owing to better hygiene, improved nutrition and medical practices based on scientific evidence. Until recently, it was expected that mortality would continue declining in all countries. However, HIV/AIDS has already produced marked increases in mortality in Africa, the region most affected by the disease.

76. About 175 million persons reside in a country other than the one in which they were born. The number of migrants more than doubled between 1960 and 2000; 60 per cent of the world's migrants reside in the more developed regions. Affecting countries of origin, transit and destination, international migration is in the forefront of national and international agendas.

77. Developed and developing countries differ significantly with regard to their population concerns. High mortality, particularly infant and child mortality, maternal mortality and mortality related to HIV/AIDS, is the most significant population concern for developing countries. The most significant demographic concern of the developed countries relates to low fertility and its consequences, including population ageing and the shrinking of the working-age population.

78. In sum, the current population picture is one of dynamic population change, reflected in new and diverse patterns of childbearing, mortality, migration, urbanization and ageing. The continuation and consequences of these population trends present opportunities as well as challenges for all societies in the twenty-first century.

Notes

[1] United Nations publication, Sales Nos. E.03.XIII.6, E.03.XIII.7 and E.03.XIII.10.

[2] To be issued in 2005 as a United Nations publication.

[3] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.04.XIII.11.

[4] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.04.XIII.6.

[5] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.04.XIII.2.

[6] ESA/P/WP.189. United Nations publication (forthcoming).

[7] ESA/P/WP.188. United Nations publication (forthcoming).

[8] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.XIII.4.

[9] United Nations publication (forthcoming).

[10] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.04.XIII.3.

[11] *Report of the United Nations World Population Conference, 1974, Bucharest, 19-30 August 1974* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.75.XIII.3), chap. I.